



# Rocky Mountain Greenway

## America's Great Outdoors

### Background/AGO

America's Great Outdoors (AGO) is President Obama's vision for a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda for the nation. Established by Presidential Memorandum on April 16, 2010, AGO is founded on the premise that long-term solutions to conservation problems should emerge from the grassroots. AGO seeks to foster stronger, more efficient partnerships between the federal government and states, tribes, and local communities to protect America's natural heritage.

From protecting large landscapes to restoring rivers to developing trail networks, AGO is a broad and diverse strategy aimed not only at conserving America's natural resources but at advancing the nation's economy through creation of jobs directly related to and dependent on conservation.

In addition, AGO seeks to reconnect Americans to the natural world and, in

so doing, help combat growing health concerns associated with a society increasingly isolated from the natural world.

The Rocky Mountain Greenway In the Fish and Wildlife Service's Mountain-Prairie Region (Region 6), AGO has catalyzed diverse partnerships and projects, including the Northern Grasslands; the Crown of the Continent; and, the Rocky Mountain Greenway (RMG).

The RMG is a partnership between local governments, the State of Colorado, the Department of the Interior, and other agencies and organizations to reconnect residents of the metropolitan Denver region with the outdoors by creating a comprehensive and vibrant trail network that provides the public with improved access to open space and wildlife-dependent recreation.



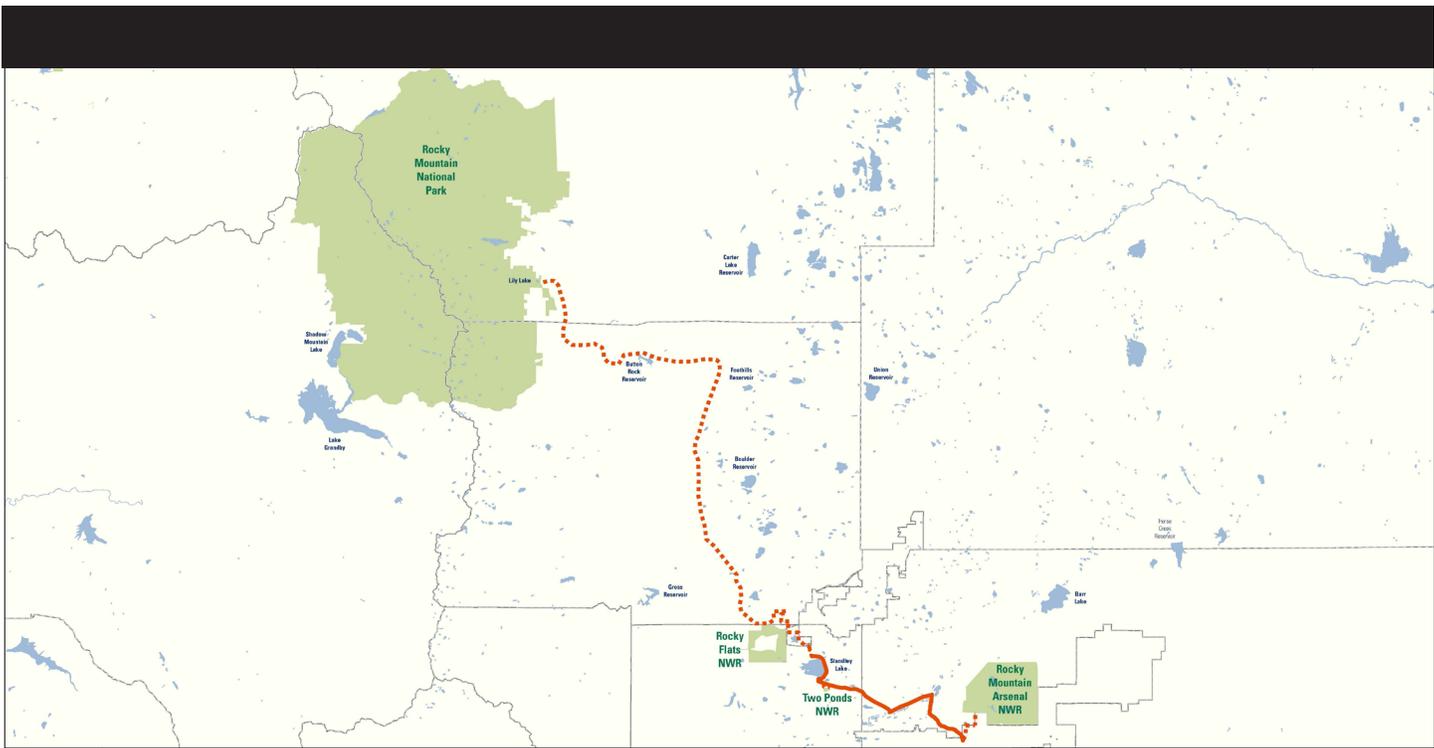
Rocky Mountain Greenway Connector trail sign / USFWS

The broad vision for the RMG, as articulated by Secretary Salazar, Colorado Governor Hickenlooper and other leadership, is to "create uninterrupted trails and transportation linkages connecting the Denver metro area's trail systems, the three national wildlife refuges in the metro region, Rocky Mountain National Park, and the community trails systems in-between."

The RMG evolved during FY11 and 12, with formal activation via the May 4, 2012 General Agreement between the Department and the State of Colorado. This agreement established an operational framework and appointed a 10-member Steering Committee consisting of executive- and senior-level leadership from Denver-area governments, agencies, organizations and other interests. Noreen Walsh, Regional Director, is a Co-Chair of the Steering Committee. Staff support for the Steering Committee is provided by the Service.



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar and Governor John Hickenlooper sign an agreement to implement the Rocky Mountain Greenway project / USFWS



Produced for the Division of Planning, Region 6  
 Denver, Colorado  
 Current to: April 6, 2012  
 Base map (Date): ESRI 2010

The Denver metropolitan region is fortunate to have three units of the National Wildlife Refuge System in close proximity: Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Two Ponds, and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuges. These three national wildlife refuges are central to the RMG because they serve as “anchor points” to which planners can tie various segments of the trail network. The geographic distribution of these refuges on the metro landscape – running east to west through the heart of the region – complements this vision. National wildlife refuges offer outstanding wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, and by connecting the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, Two Ponds, and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuges via a trail system, this project will help promote awareness of these assets among area residents and encourage the public to take advantage of the superlative birding, hiking, fishing and environmental education opportunities available at these refuges and at the many open spaces, parks and other natural areas in the region, including, ultimately, Rocky Mountain National Park.

The RMG is important because it will elevate metropolitan Denver’s already-

impressive network of trails and natural areas to world-class status by enhancing connectivity among and between one of the nation’s largest urban national wildlife refuges, numerous local trail systems, an iconic national park, and many other local open spaces and natural resources. This greater connectivity will provide Denver area residents and visitors with improved access to rivers, parks, and numerous other outdoor/wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities, which will in turn promote greater public support for conservation and outdoor-oriented lifestyles, resulting in healthier, more economically vibrant communities.

**Current and Near-term Activities and Accomplishments**

Operationally, the Fish and Wildlife Service and the federal, state, and local entities with whom the Service partnering on this project will work to identify gaps in the region’s trail systems and plan and construct trails to connect and close those gaps. As part of that work, we will identify opportunities to develop and deliver additional outdoor/wildlife-dependent recreation for trail users.

Though the RMG and the associated

Steering Committee have only been in place for a short period, the partners have realized several important early successes, including the following:

- The Service and our RMG partners, notably the Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership (SCRGP), completed critical non-motorized trail linkage between Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge and existing Sand Creek Regional Greenway. This linkage effectively connects the refuge for the first time with metropolitan Denver’s robust and ever-increasing regional trail and open space network, advancing the Service’s goals of better-integrating the refuge to that network and providing non-motorized access to one of the largest urban refuges in the NWRS. The Service funded this project with approximately \$350,000 of US DOT Sarbanes Transit in Parks (TRIP) grant money, delivered on the ground through the SCRGP. In addition, working with SCRGP, we developed and posted AGO signage in both English and Spanish for trail users along multiple miles of connecting trails in the vicinity of RMA NWR.
- The Service and our partners with



*Map of Rocky Mountain Greenway Trail: Link to Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuge*

US Department of Transportation/ Federal Highways Administration/ Central Federal Lands Division and several jurisdictions in west metro Denver contracted with Atkins, a global leader in infrastructure engineering and design, to conduct a feasibility study to identify potential routes between Two Ponds and Rocky Flats NWR. The Service contributed approximately \$235,000 in NWRS road funds to the study, the results of which will inform and guide future efforts to connect these refuges to one another and to existing and emerging regional trail networks (and to RMA NWR).

- In February 2013, the Rocky Mountain Greenway partnership, including the State of Colorado, the Service, local municipalities and nongovernmental organizations applied for and received more than \$1.7 million in new funding through a Sarbanes Transit in Parks grant. The funding, part of the Federal

Transit Administration's Transit in Parks program, will help establish an uninterrupted trail and open space network in the Denver metropolitan area. The grant will provide for the initial design and construction of the western trail link, connecting Rocky Flats and Two Ponds national wildlife refuges to the Greater Denver trail system. The new trail link will be approximately 7 miles long.

- The Service, working closely with the State of Colorado (co-signatory to the May 4, 2012 General Agreement between the Department and CO that formally established the RMG), convened three meetings of the RMG Steering Committee to scope and support priority projects for the RMG. The Service provided dedicated staff support for these meetings and delivered a variety of work products to advance the work of the SC.

Going forward, the Service and our partners will work to complete the feasibility study and address and resolve any outstanding issues related to routes, funding and other elements of the Two Ponds-Rocky Flats connection.

In addition, we will continue to participate in and support the RMG Steering Committee as an active federal partner, supporting the work of the SC and our partners as the Steering Committee identifies and pursues priority projects for the RMG.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Region 6**  
134 Union Blvd, Lakewood, CO 80228

**For State relay service**  
TTY / Voice: 711

**U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service**  
<http://www.fws.gov>

**February 2013**